Conference on Disarm[illegible]t

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and fiftieth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 1 March 2018, at 3 p.m.

President: Ms. Veronika Bard ..... (Sweden)

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The President: I call to order the 1450th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear colleagues, after three intense and interesting days of high-level meetings, with many insightful statements from the podium and the floor, it is time to meet in our regular setting. I have reflected on the statements made and found that some themes were recurrent in many of them:

- The Conference on Disarmament must fulfil its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament forum. Given the developments in the world and the current security situation, the importance of that mandate is not diminishing but rather increasing.
- The Conference needs to resume substantive work and increase its level of activity.
- The decision taken by the Conference on 16 February 2018 is a welcome and positive development.

I found those comments very helpful. They serve to underline the responsibility we all share and the importance of what we have to accomplish in this chamber.

According to the second operative paragraph of the 16 February decision, the Conference will appoint the coordinators for the five subsidiary bodies, under the guidance of the presidency and on the basis of equitable regional distribution.

Let me inform you briefly on how the work to identify the coordinators is progressing. I have held a number of consultations on this issue and have found that the process of identifying the coordinators is far from easy. I have so far identified three excellent candidates who are prepared to shoulder the responsibility of coordinating the subsidiary bodies and who, very importantly, I believe will meet with the approval of the Conference. Other colleagues have declined for various reasons, which I fully respect. There have also been some cases in which proposed nominations have met with objections. I will continue with the consultations and am hopeful that I will soon be able to present to you a list of nominees that will be approved by all delegations.

Dear colleagues, if we are serious about getting back to work, we should start soon. The subsidiary bodies need sufficient time to be able to perform their mandated tasks in a way that will strengthen the Conference and lead it towards the goal of negotiating effective measures.

This brings me to the issue of a timetable for the work of the subsidiary bodies.

Unlike the appointment of the coordinators, which is clearly defined in the second operative paragraph of the 16 February decision, the issue of the timetable is not mentioned in the decision, aside from the reference to even allocation of time. However, we have heard a number of clear messages in this regard. In my view, this is something the presidencies and the coordinators will have to take into account when planning the calendar of meetings.

With that in mind, I have some thoughts that I would like to share with you. In my opinion, there are three main principles that should guide the development of the timetable. The first is the critical importance of allocating time equally among the subsidiary bodies; the second is that account must be taken of the ongoing disarmament agenda outside of the Conference; and the third is the importance of allowing delegations to prepare properly by providing clear information, well in advance, about the time of the meetings and the topics that will be discussed. The latter is particularly significant given that delegations vary in size and capacity; it will also facilitate the participation of experts from capitals.

I envisage that the work of the subsidiary bodies will start not later than 12 March and will be finalized by 17 August. That will allow the final presidency of this year to focus our work on preparing and adopting the report of the Conference. With the understanding that the coordinators will need to provide their input, I believe it would be helpful for the work of the subsidiary bodies to be divided into three phases.

In the first — preparatory —phase, each subsidiary body would be allocated half a day in which the respective coordinators would present their ideas on the work to be

conducted. This phase should start as soon as the coordinators are appointed and are ready to start their work.

In the second — substantive — phase, each subsidiary body would be allocated two weeks. The exact allocation of dates would be decided by the coordinators together with the President or presidencies.

In the third — concluding — phase, each subsidiary body would be allocated half a day to allow the respective coordinators to present and discuss the reports that will be submitted to the Conference through the President.

The number of days actually available for the work of the subsidiary bodies will, of course, depend on when they can start their work, that is to say, when we have reached a decision on the appointment of the coordinators.

The order of the work of the subsidiary bodies need not follow their numerical order. It would be determined by the coordinators, together with the President, with due regard for other disarmament events in Geneva that may help or hinder the work of the subsidiary bodies.

The regular plenary meetings of the Conference would take place throughout the session. That would allow regular updates on the progress of the subsidiary bodies, as well as provide opportunities for the presidency to follow up and report on possible developments concerning a programme of work. We must, of course, also provide delegations with the possibility to engage in discussions on any subject related to the work of the Conference, as is normally the case.

There seems to be a general understanding on the need to move forward. I would therefore ask you to consider my outline favourably in order to allow for the preparation and presentation to the Conference of a detailed timetable once the coordinators are appointed. As always, the full text of my statement — with all the details — will be available on the Conference's website.

I now open up the floor for any delegation that would like to take this opportunity to comment.

As I see no delegation wishing to take the floor, this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place as scheduled on 6 March 2018 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 3.15 p.m.